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ABSTRACT

Hypothesizing that a person's views, perceptions, and reactions will vary according to the kind of community in which he lives and that the differences will be influenced by his status position in the community, data were obtained via personal interviews with 803 men and women aged 20 and over living in a rural county in Southern Appalachia and a metropolitan center outside the Region. Each individual was asked to respond to 72 statements constituting 24 attitude scales relative to: economic well-being; self-image; morale; community life; family relationships; and general outlook. Divided into 4 age groups (20-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60 and over), the respondents constituted a relatively homogeneous group, being predominantly Protestant, married, and white. The median years of formal education and the annual incomes reported were substantially higher in the urban center. Major results were: metro persons scored more favorably than nonmetro respondents on the attitude scale by a ratio of 2.5 to 1.; but when controls were introduced for marital status, sex, health condition, age, and level of formal education, this ratio was modified; the greatest disparities in metro and nonmetro attitudes occurred in subjective economic deprivation and self-image, suggesting a pronounced need in the nonmetro county for interventions by action agencies with economic and mental health programs. (JC)

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ATTITUDES: METRO AND NONMETRO

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ATTITUDES: METRO AND NONMETRO

Changing social and demographic trends have stimulated increasing interest in the relative merits of living in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas of the United States. A recent development has been a reversal from a population decline in nonmetro counties begun in the 1960's to one of growth in the 1970's. Information about the well-being of persons now living in a metropolitan center and a nonmetropolitan county would indicate some of the relative advantages and disadvantages of life in the two areas.

This paper is concerned with the subjective aspects of well-being and it is assumed that these aspects will be revealed in the attitudes of the respondents. The term "attitude", as used in this paper, refers to a complex of knowledge, beliefs, notions, and values which tend to shape peoples' views of the world and events, their perceptions of themselves and others, and their reactions to environmental conditions and circumstances. It is hypothesized that a person's views, perceptions, and reactions will vary according to the kind of community in which he lives and that the differences will be influenced by his status position in the community. The following report thus seeks answers to two interrelated questions. (1) In what ways do metro and nonmetro persons differ in their attitudes? (2) In what ways are these differences influenced by indicators of social status, such as age, sex, and education, and marital and health status?

METHODS

In 1971, data were collected by means of structured interviews with 803 persons who comprised probability samples of men and women aged 20-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60 and over living in a rural county of the Southern Appalachian Region and in a metropolitan center located outside of the Region. The metropolitan center had a population of about 160,000 and the rural county had a population of about 6,500. City blocks in the urban center and small areas of land in the rural county constituted the sampling units. These were selected according to a table of random numbers to yield approximately 100 cases in each of the age groups in the urban and the rural areas. No institutionalized persons were included. It is to be noted that the two geographic areas studied are not representative of metro and nonmetro environments in the United States.

All homes in each city block and in each area of rural land in the samples were visited by an interviewer to obtain information from persons in the four stipulated age groups. If a prospective respondent was not at home on the first visit, an appointment was made for a subsequent interview. If more than one person in the same household was to be interviewed, special effort was made to guarantee independent responses. In most cases each respondent in a household was interviewed alone. In the few cases where this was impossible, the interview with one person was completed before another was started. The questions that elicited information for this report were interspersed throughout a fifteen-page interview schedule.

The respondents were almost entirely of the Protestant faith, predominantly married, and predominantly white; 9 percent of the respondents were Black Americans residing in the urban center; and 39 percent of the oldest age group were widowed. Because of the greater inaccessibility of working men for interview, women outnumbered men in the samples by a ratio of two to one, a ratio at variance with the population in the areas.

In the urban center, the median years of formal education in the four age groups, young to old, were respectively 12.5, 12.0, 11.6, and 8.5. In the rural area, the educational level was substantially lower; the corresponding medians were 8.0, 7.2, 5.0, and 3.9 years.

The annual incomes reported by the metro men were substantially higher than those of the men in the nonmetro sample. In the metropolitan center, the medians of the annual incomes of men in the four age groups, young to old, were as follows: $7,332, $9,554, $9,333, and $2,199. In the rural area, the corresponding medians were: $4,999, $7,856, $5,776, and $1,449. Only about one-half of the women respondents reported that they had incomes of their own. In both geographic areas, it was principally the youngest (age 20-29) and the oldest (60 and over) women who reported income. In the urban center, the median annual incomes of the youngest and oldest women were, respectively, $1,000 and $1724. In the rural sample, the corresponding medians were $398 and $887.

Attitudes were assessed by presenting each respondent with 72 statements constituting 24 scales on attitudes about self, morale, and outlook, and about family, economic, and community conditions. Respondents

gave an "agree", a "don't know", or a "disagree" answer to each statement. These responses were scored three, two, and one, respectively, permitting a mean score range from three to nine for each set. Intercorrelations among statements on each scale ranged from 0.73 to 0.96, indicating that the items did assess a common underlying dimension. In the following analyses, one-tailed statistical tests were used because of the directional nature of the hypotheses.

The three statements constituting each scale were designed to run either in a "positive" or a "negative" direction (see Appendix). In the following analyses only the attitude scales are reported that yielded statistically significant differences in mean scores between metro and nonmetro persons. The significance of difference between any two attitudinal mean scores was computed by using the T-test (Mueler, et. al., 1970, 410-416). A statistically significant higher mean socre on a "positive" scale and a statistically significant lower mean score on a "negative" scale have been designated "favorable" scores.

FINDINGS

Comparisons of mean scores on the 24 attitude scales yielded 21 statistically significant differences between the metro and the nonmetro respondents. Of these 21 statistically significant differences in mean scale scores, the metro persons scored more "favorably" than the nonmetro on 15, and the nonmetro persons scored more "favorably" than the metro on 6, resulting in an overall ratio favoring the metro people of 2.5 to one. This ratio varied according to each of the six categories of attitude scales. On four attitude scale categories, the metro persons revealed the more favorable scores, on one category the metro and nonmetro persons made an equal number of favorable scores, and on one scale category the

nonmetro persons made the more favorable scores (Table 1).

The category of attitude scales yielding the greatest disparity between metro and nonmetro persons was that assessing subjective economic deprivation. This category attempted to measure the respondents' attitudes about financial worry, about the condition of their housing, and about their need for more money. On each of the three scales in this category the metro persons made the more favorable score. Metro persons, compared with nonmetro, worried less about their financial condition, revealed greater satisfaction with their housing, and maintained that they had less need for more money.

Four attitude scales were used to identify the self-image of the respondents. One scale included statements about a positive self-image, another contained statements about a negative image, a third revealed a positive self-rating of health condition, and a fourth a negative rating of health. On three of the four self-image scales, the metro persons made the more favorable scores. Nonmetro men and women, compared with the metro people, revealed a more negative view of themselves, a poorer evaluation of positive aspects of their health, and stronger worries about their state of health and health care. One self-image scale--the positive self-evaluation--did not yield a significant difference in mean scores between the metro and the nonmetro persons.

The morale of the metro persons was substantially higher than that of the nonmetro people in the study. This subjective state was measured by means of four scales which assessed feelings of pessimism, a sense of dreariness in life, a feeling of emptiness, and a general feeling of happiness. On three of the four scales, the metro persons made the more favorable scores. Metro people, compared with nonmetro men

and women, were more optimistic about life, found their lives less dreary, and maintained stronger feelings about leading useful lives. On the other hand, on one morale scale the nonmetro persons scored more favorably than did the metro. Nonmetro men and women maintained that they found greater happiness in their present life than did the metro people.

The metro people, compared with the nonmetro revealed substantially more favorable attitudes about the community in which they lived. Community evaluation was assessed by means of four scales, one on satisfaction with visiting patterns, one on the degree of neighborliness in the community, one on a rating of the neighborhood as a place in which to live, and the fourth on a general evaluation of their respective communities. The metro persons scored more favorably than the nonmetro on three out of the four community scales. The metro people revealed more favorable attitudes than the nonmetro regarding visiting patterns, neighborliness, and general community evaluation. On one community scale - that which served to rate the neighborhood as a place in which to live — the nonmetro persons made a more favorable score than did the metro.

Favorable attitudes about family life were equally distributed among metro and nonmetro persons. Five scales were used in this category. These were designed to assess family pride, family support, family rejection, family worry, and satisfaction with childhood. The metro persons scored more favorably than the nonmetro on two of these scales. The metro persons revealed less family rejection and less family worry than did the nonmetro. On the other hand, the nonmetro persons also made the more favorable scores on two attitude scales. The nonmetro men and women revealed greater family pride and stronger family support

than did the metro people. On one family scale -- that evaluating childhood life -- no significant difference was found between metro and nonmetro respondents.

The one category of scales on which the nonmetro persons scored more favorably than the metro was that assessing a general outlook on life. Four scales were used to assess this outlook: attitudes about religion, attitudes about time, attitudes about personal gratification, and attitudes reflecting a sense of failure. The nonmetro persons scored more favorably than the metro men and women on two scales. Nonmetro persons revealed the stronger religious convictious and a stronger feeling of personal gratification with life then did the metro sample. In contrast, the metro people revealed a more positive attitude about the use of time than did the nonmetro sample. One general outlook scale -- that evaluating a sense of failure in life -- yielded no significant difference between metro and nonmetro people.

The overall ratio of favorable attitude scale scores of 2.5 to 1, metro to nonmetro, was modified when controls were introduced for marital status, sex, health condition, age, and level of education (Table 2). The greatest disparity in favorable attitude scale scores occurred between single persons in the two communities. The ratio of favorable attitude scale scores between single persons, metro to nonmetro, was 4.3 to 1, while between married persons the respective ratio was 3.3 to 1. The variable of sex did not affect the ratio of favorable attitudes scores between the two communities. Between males, metro and nonmetro, the ratio of favorable attitude scale scores was 2.8 to 1, and that between females in the two communities was identical.

Self-reported health condition had slight bearing upon the metro to nonmetro ratio of favorable attitude scores. Between persons with no reported ailments, metro to nonmetro, the ratio of favorable attitude scale scores was 2.8 to 1, while between persons reporting one or more ailments the respective ratio was 2.6 to 1.

The ratio of favorable attitude scale scores, metro to nonmetro, increased with the age of the respondents. Between persons aged 20 to 29 living in the two communities, the ratio of favorable attitude scale scores, metro to nonmetro, was 1.8 to 1. Between persons aged 45 to 59 in the two communities, the respective ratio was 2.5 to 1, and between persons aged 60 and over the respective ratio was 2.4 to 1.

Of the five independent variables considered, the level of formal eudcation yielded the smallest ratios of favorable attitude scale scores between the metro and nonmetro respondents. Between persons of low e cational level (10 years or less), metro and nonmetro, the ratio of favorable attitude scale scores was 1.7 to 1, while between persons with more formal education (11 years of more) the respective ratio was 1.6 to 1.

The scale scores in each of the six attitude categories varied with the introduction of controls for marital status, sex, health condition, age, and level of formal education (Table 2). However, regardless of the control variable used, in no instance did the nonmetro persons score more favorably than the metro persons on attitudes assessing economic outlook or self-image. On three categories of attitude scales -- morale, family, and general outlook -- the control variables resulted in some instances in more favorable attitude scale scores of the non-

metro men and women in comparison with the metro people (Table 2).

IMPLICATIONS

The foregoing analyses of subjective well-being in a metropolitan center and a nonmetropolitan county in the United States have implications for persons and organizations involved in improving the quality of life in the nonmetropolitan county.

One of the salient findings of this study is the pronounced subjective economic deprivation revealed by the people living in the nonmetro county. These feelings and attitudes of the people in the nonmetro county about financial worry, conditions of housing, and need for money exceed to a considerable degree on objective index of their economic condition. The median annual incomes reported by the men in the study, metro and nonmetro, were $7,104 and $5,020, respectively, representing a ratio of 1.4 to one. Among the women who reported annual incomes, the medians, metro and nonmetro, were $1,362 and $642, respectively, representing a ratio of 2.1 to one. The income differences between the metro and the nonmetro persons were less than the differences in attitudes of which the overall ratio favored the metro people by 2.5 to one.

Two possible explanations may be offered for this discrepancy. One is that the economic plight of the nonmetro persons permeates their entire existence and this permeation is reflected in a wide variety of attitude scores. A second possible and related explanation may be found in the cultural life of the nonmetro people. The nonmetro county studied is part of the Southern Appalachian Region of the United States. Recent studies have revealed the strong folk character of the Region (Ford, 1962; Loof, 1971; Plunkett and Bowman, 1973; Stephenson, 1968; Schwarz -

Weller, et. al., 1971; and Walls and Stephan, 1972). This traditional and folk quality of life may be inadequate in helping the nonmetro people to cope with the complex problems of an industrialized society into which they have been thrust (Warner, 1974). This inadequacy may be reflected in a wide variety of negative attitudes manifested by the nonmetro people. Whatever the explanations may be of the economic disadvantages existing in the nonmetro county, the findings of this study serve to point to the need and high priority for economic interventions on the part of action agencies.

Another salient finding of this study is the low regard the nonmetro persons have of themselves. The self-image category of attitude scales assessed both physical health and self-concept. In both of these components, the nonmetro persons gave substantially less favorable responses than did the metro people. The crucial importance of self-conception in the study of human behavior is attested by its central position in the disciplines of social psychology (Mead, 1950; Hollander, 1971) and social psychiatry (Sullivan, 1953; Goodman and Maultsby, 1974). Available evidence indicates that the concept one has of himself is a critical factor in his ability to cope with many problems of life. The low self-image of the nonmetro persons in this study suggest a high priority of need for programs and services related to physical and mental health.

The less favorable attitudes revealed by the older than younger nonmetro persons, in comparisons with their metro counterparts, suggest a generational factor may be involved. The older nonmetro persons, born in the early 1900's, undoubtedly internalized values and attitudes in their

formative years characteristic of an agrarian society. The younger nonmetro persons were probably more exposed in their formative years to the idealogy of an industrialized society. The older nonmetro persons, by retaining many of their early life attitudes, find themselves somewhat "out-of-tune" with the attitudes of the older metro people. The generational factor may be of considerable importance to persons and organizations developing services for older nonmetro people.

A final observation may be made about the role of formal education in the subjective well-being of the people studied. When level of education was controlled, the nonmetro people made a better attitudinal showing than when any of the other factors were controlled. The finding suggests that one of the long-range factors in improving the subjective well-being of the nonmetro people lies in raising their level of formal education.

SUMMARY

This research has assessed the ways adults in a metropolitan center and a nonmetropolitan county vary in their attitudes. Data were collected by personal interview with 803 men and women aged 20 and over living in a rural county in the Southern Appalachian Region and in a metropolitan center outside the Region. Each person responded to 72 statements constituting 24 attitude scales about economic well-being, self-image, morale, community life, family relationships, and general outlook. Metro persons scored more favorably than the nonmetro respondents on the attitude scales by a ratio of 2.5 to one. This ratio was modified when controls were introduced for marital status, sex, health condition, age, and level of formal education. The greatest disparities in metro

and nonmetro attitudes occurred in subjective economic deprivation and self-image, suggesting the pronounced need in the nonmetro county for interventions by action agencies with economic and mental health programs. It is recognized that the metro and nonmetro areas in this study are not representative of such areas in the United States and the findings thus apply only to the areas studied.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Paper [redacted]e presented at the annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, San Francisco, California, August, 1975. This study was made jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station. Interpretations are those of the author and not necessarily of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the Kentucky Experiment Station. Acknowledgement is made to J. S. Brown, A. L. Colemen, C. M. Coughenour, T. R. Ford, B. Green, M. Jordan, and W. F. Kenkel for advice and assistance; to S. Goerke, P. Whitehall, W. Davenhall, and R. King for field work; to C. Morgan for assistance with tabulations.

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APPENDIX: ATTITUDE SCALES

1. Financial worry. I worry a lot about family finances. I think my family spends too much money on foolish things. I wish we could save more money each month. 2. Housing. I wish I had a better house to live in. This house always has something that needs fixing. This house needs major repairs. 3. Need Money. I wish I had more opportunities to earn money. I have to go without some things because I don't have enough money. I would be a lot happier if I had more money. 4. Positive Image. Most people think I am more friendly than others my age. If I make promises, I always carry them out. I am sure my appearance is better than others my age. 5. Negative Image. Sometimes I feel as though I am not much good. I wish I had more confidence in myself. All things considered, I feel that I am a failure. 6. Positive Health. My health is good enough for me to do all the things I want to. My health is much better than people my own age. I have perfect health. 7. Negative Health. I worry more about my health than I used to. I sometimes wish I were in better health. I would like to have more health care than I am getting now. 8. Pessimism.[1] Nowadays, a person has to live for today and let tomorrow take care of itself. In spite of what some people say, the life of the average man today is getting worse, not better. It is hardly fair to bring children into the world the way things look for the future. 9. Dreariness. My life could be happier than it is now. Most of the things I do are rather dull. This is the dreariest time of my life. 10. Emptiness. I feel my life could be more useful. 11. Happiness. This is the

[1] Adapted from Srole (1956).

Appendix (cont'd)

happiest time of my life. If I could live my life over again, I would live it exactly the same way. Taking all things into account, I think I am as happy as most people my age. 12. Visiting. I would like to spend more time visiting with people. I wish I had more close friends. I would like to know my neighbors better. 13. Neighborliness. I would like to take part in more social activities. I wish people would visit me more often. Life would be more enjoyable if people were more neighborly. 14. Good Neighborhood. This neighborhood is an ideal place to live in. The people in this neighborhood are real friendly. I can find all the things I want to do in this neighborhood. 15. Community Not Good. I think I would be happier if I moved to a different community. The main trouble with this community is lack of things to do. This would be a better community if people were more friendly. 16. Family Pride. My parents were much more successful in life than I will ever be. I am pleased that my relatives have turned out so well. When I was a child, I felt that my family was much better off than other families I knew. 17. Family Support. I know I can always count on help from my family if I really need it. I always ask advice of my family before making any decisions. My greatest happiness in life comes from my family. 18. Family Rejection. Friends are more important to me than relatives. Most families have a lot of arguments. Sometimes I feel my family could get along without me. 19. Family Worry. I worry more about my family than other people my age. My relatives cause me a lot of worry. Family problems are my greatest worry at the present time.

Appendix (cont'd)

20. Childhood. Without a doubt, my childhood was the happiest time of my life. When I was a child, I had all the things I wanted. As a child, I was as happy as other children I played with. 21. Religious. My religion helps me solve many of my problems. I get a great deal of comfort out of my religion. In the final analysis, my religion is the only thing I can really count on. 22. Time. I get upset if I don't have several things planned each day. I have many ideas about exciting activities for the next month. I expect interesting and pleasant things to happen to me in the future. 23. Gratification. As I look at my life today, I am more than satisfied with it. I have gotten pretty much what I expect out of life. I have everything I need to make me happy. 24. Failure. If I could live my life over again, I would do things differently. I often get tired of trying to do the right thing. Some days I don't think life is worth living.

Table 1

Mean Attitude Scale Scores in a Metropolitan and a Nonmetropolitan Area of Kentucky: 1971

Attitude		Metro (N=400)	Nonmetro (N=403)	t	
Economic					
Financial worry	-	5.62	6.25	5.02	***
Housing	-	5.15	6.17	6.82	***
Need money	-	6.06	6.85	5.12	***
Self-image					
Positive image	+	6.76	6.81	0.58	
Negative image	-	5.42	6.22	6.51	***
Positive health	+	6.71	6.43	1.84	*
Negative health	-	5.29	6.00	4.55	***
Morale					
Pessimism	-	5.35	6.60	8.65	***
Dreariness	-	4.92	5.21	2.24	*
Emptiness	-	6.27	6.60	3.37	***
Happiness	+	6.61	6.84	1.98	*
Community					
Visiting	-	5.96	6.68	4.68	***
Neighborliness	-	6.20	6.81	4.04	***
Good neighborhood	+	6.95	7.47	3.84	***
Community not good	-	4.54	5.33	6.04	***
Family					
Pride	+	5.75	5.95	1.79	*
Support	+	6.93	7.65	5.88	***
Rejection	-	5.66	5.88	1.78	*
Worry	-	4.88	5.58	5.06	***
Childhood	+	5.96	6.11	1.30	
Outlook					
Religion	+	6.98	8.02	7.24	***
Time	+	6.59	5.86	6.10	***
Gratification	+	6.61	7.31	4.98	***
Failure	-	5.43	5.56	0.93	

One-Tailed Test

* $P < 0.05$

*** $P < 0.001$

Table 2

Favorable Attitude Scale Scores in a Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area of Kentucky, by Marital Status, Sex, Health, Age, and Education: 1971.

	N		ATTITUDE SCALE CATEGORIES												
			Economic		Self-Image		Morale		Community		Family		Outlook		Ratio
	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M : NM
Marital Status															
Married	253	324	3	0	2	0	2	0	3	1	2	2	1	2	3.3:1
Single	147	79	3	0	3	0	3	0	2	0	1	2	1	1	4.3:1
Sex															
Male	127	144	1	0	2	0	2	0	3	1	1	1	2	2	2.8:1
Female	273	259	3	0	2	0	3	0	3	1	1	2	1	2	2.8:1
Health															
No ailments	258	220	3	0	2	0	2	0	2	1	1	1	1	2	2.8:1
1 or more ailments	142	183	3	0	2	0	3	0	3	1	1	2	1	2	2.6:1
Age															
20-29	98	102	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	1	1	2	1	2	1.8:1
30-44	101	102	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	2.0:1
45-59	99	101	3	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	0	2	1	2	2.5:1
60 and over	102	98	3	0	2	0	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	2.4:1
Education															
Low*	101	265	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	1.7:1
High*	299	138	2	0	1	0	1	2	3	0	0	1	1	2	1.6:1

*Low education = 10 years or less.

High education = 11 years or more.